THINK TANK

Deliberation process on the work of the future

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DIGITAL PLATFORMS (ECOSYSTEMS) AND DIGITAL TRANSITION (ORGANISATIONS)

1. Context for reflection

Processes of prevention, warning, diagnosis, information sharing, use of common resources, evaluation and improvement are being digitalised. However, attention is not being digitised, let alone care. Care and attention must be increasingly personal and humanised (personalised models). What is important is to ensure that the time contributed by professionals is valuable time that is used for support and relationship needs, removing bureaucratic or mechanical tasks that can almost entirely be handled by applications and automatisms. The aim is to apply technology to support and create facilitating environments, together with generalised training but not replacing the personal and human relationship with the users.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of digitalising care and attention in Gipuzkoa?

2.1. Advantages

Development of a single (social and health) record

New technologies (Artificial Intelligence, for example) make it possible to identify, record and combine different sources of data in order to develop a unique health and social record for each person. This single record would facilitate social and health care management, improving efficiency and also social integration because the services would be adapted to specific needs based on the users track record.

Agile Management

New technologies facilitate swift, flexible and timely management of information systems with benefits for managing health and social services systems. Swift and flexible management is not only related to efficiency but also to including users in social and health management.

Personalisation of care

This is one of the central assets for which the benefits of using technology (especially digital technologies, AI and Big Data) is argued given the ability to process and adapt to the information needs of health and social care systems, facilitating personalisation thanks to the effective use of dynamic data, in particular in the personalisation of services. This represents an advantage for personalisation of health and social care services provided that adequate controls are in place.

Comprehensive overview and data availability

One of the advantages of Digital Technologies is the capacity to integrate and process data. The integration of single data (a single piece of data in a single place) can be an advantage for health and social care management. This integration allows a comprehensive overview of the case and the social/healthcare record, which offers advantages when it comes to managing services that are adapted to the needs of the users.

Increased coverage and accessibility

New technologies make it possible to broaden the impact and coverage of services, not only in terms of a greater number of users accessing technology and technologised services, but also in terms of the diversity of profiles and therefore of quantitative and qualitative criteria. This boosts additional accessibility to services, helping to cater to people based on their rhythm of life, needs and preferences.

Increase in quality of services

The combination of technologies with direct care can represent an improvement in the quality of care since these technologies make care more efficient and facilitate immediate access to relevant information (such as users social/healthcare record).

Increased foresight capacity

Digital technologies (artificial intelligence and Big Data) using mass data and data sets can improve the predictive and prospective capacity in matters of care, facilitating prevention and anticipation that will improve the management of social services.

Improvement in organisational management

New technologies facilitate organisational management (information processing, impact monitoring and evaluation, project management, personnel management, economic management, etc.), constituting an important potential for improving the quality of the health and social care system.

Improved case management

New technologies facilitate case management due to the adaptability of the technologies, the integration of information in the individual's life history and social/healthcare record, and speed and flexibility in providing timely and suitable responses to each specific situation.

Improvement in communication capacity

Digital technologies have shown their ability to facilitate immediate and real-time communication between people with different user profiles, services, organisations,

relatives and professionals. This capacity can be better exploited by social services to foster new channels of communication.

2.2. Disadvantages

Technology Divide

The technology divide is evident between different generations (digital natives vs. non-digital natives) and this is seen particularly among older people (as compared to digital natives), and also in organisations (smaller organisations have more difficulties than larger ones in keeping up to date with the technology), and also between different territories (urban vs. rural) where the gap in digital access is also a disadvantage. The digital divide can be a reason and cause for (digital) social exclusion and is therefore a disadvantage (as a starting point) that needs to be addressed with a systemic approach to technology.

Depersonalisation of care

Although the capacity of technologies to personalise services has been noted, it has also been observed that technologies tend to standardise services, leading to depersonalisation. This can be seen not so much in the use of digital technologies but in robotics when it is intended for the care of the elderly in institutional settings (such as care centres and care homes).

Mistrust (right to privacy)

The use of technologically obtained data and the issue of right to privacy and control of personal information obtained using digital technologies are factors that can cause mistrust and represent a disadvantage for the expansion and use of new technologies in the social and health care field. Increased control of information, decreased privacy, are serious obstacles to digitisation (from the perspective of users).

Process standardisation and loss of control

Digital technologies have a tendency to standardise and homogenise management processes, but this does not always mean changing the organisational culture behind these management processes (organisational, care and relationships). A potential disadvantage of these standardisation processes is that practitioners lose their capacity of control over care settings because their operative capacity is transferred to technological resources.

3. What are the main dimensions that should be included in a digitalisation strategy for the Third Sector?

3.1. Levers

Flexibility and adaptability of organisations

One of the levers that can facilitate digitisation of Third Sector organisations is their ability to adapt and flexibility to integrate new processes. This is due in particular to the small size and accessibility of the management involved.

Increase in service efficiency and effectiveness

New technologies offer an incomparable advantage to optimise processes by generating added value for users, organisations / institutions and the ecosystem in general.

Training in technological skills

Training in and development of technological skills among organisations and users is one of the key levers for the digitalisation of care, services and organisations. In addition, training strategies make it possible to reduce existing technological divides, either between different profiles (older people) or territories (rural areas).

Availability of specialised companies

The province of Gipuzkoa has a critical mass of companies specialising in new technologies (although not all specialise in the social and healthcare area). This represents a lever for digitalisation, since there is potential for the development of new adapted services and technological products, as well as support in the digital transition.

The pandemic and digital culture

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an unexpected boost in the mass use of digital technologies, breaking down barriers to use that existed before the crisis. This is a new impetus and a lever for change towards the digital transition from the perspective of users and organisations.

Promoting the development of digital social business models for care

The generation of resources for promoting new social business models, market opportunities, for technological development applied to care can be a lever of change for promoting the digital transition in the third sector and social services.

Creation of technological units

The creation of technological units in all third-sector organisations, with a major influence in cultural transformation and redesign of processes. The profiles must have skills in process engineering, communication tools and application development with three functions: R&D, project management, training and support. At least 10–15% of the workforce, as well as temporary subcontracting.

3.2. Limitations

Cost of the digital transition (economic)

The digital transition requires the significant and regular convergence of public and private funds (training, upskilling, equipment, licenses, platforms, support and technological management). This investment can lead to different speeds in the digital transition (between small and large organisations), which is a disadvantage in driving the digital transition.

Sharing data with other organisations (collaborative)

Sharing data with other organisations in the sector and with administrations is also an obstacle, given that it is a small sector, with limited capacity to expand globally, and that it competes locally for scarce resources.

Vision of the added value of technologies (cultural)

In the third sector and the social services there are limitations to understanding not only the complexity of technological systems but in particular their added value; in other words, there is a lack of an overview of the advantages (as opposed to the disadvantages) of digitalisation.

Lack of a strategic diagnosis on the use of technologies (strategic)

One important limitation for promotion of the digital transition in the third sector and the social services involves the lack of a strategic diagnosis of technologies (degree of penetration of technologies, types of technologies, level of use and acquired skills, etc.) that would allow future needs and strategies to be estimated.

Lack of staff trained in new technologies

The lack of trained personnel dedicated to promoting new technologies in the care sector (social services) is a limitation not only because of the lack of a critical mass of qualified personnel but also due to the lack of technological leadership in the third sector.

4. What are the main dimensions that Digital Platforms should have to connect organisations, services and users?

4.1. Accessible and intuitive platforms

Digital Platforms must be accessible, intuitive and easy to use, not only by users, but also by organisations and government. Open government strategies are moving in this direction, but there is still a long way to go. From this point of view, the platforms must be designed on the basis of a technological diagnosis of the sector and from the perspective of the users and user organisations, to guarantee adaptability and usability.

4.2. Organisational and technological connectivity

Digital Platforms should facilitate the connectivity of all organisations (not just some of them) to develop learning strategies (best practice, for example). Equal access to new technologies and their systems can be an advantage for the whole network. On the other hand, it is also about the connectivity of a very diverse set of technologies and not just a few (software, artificial intelligence, etc.). Interoperability is an important condition for developing digital platforms.

4.3. Security and data protection

The expansion of digitalisation in the sector depends to a large extent on the confidence generated by the use of technologies, not only in organisations but also among users. The existence of clear, understandable and accessible protocols for data control and data security is a key issue to facilitate the use of new technologies and the development of platforms.

4.4. Access to finance for the digital transition

Although the platforms usually have a strictly technological function, they can be equipped better to provide technical support and also to allocate economic resources based on

specific criteria to facilitate promotion of the digital transition in the third sector and social services. This twin function of digital platforms (supporting connectivity, but also driving forward the transition) could be novel and innovative.

4.5. Cultural use of technologies

Technologies are seen as supports that facilitate access, efficiency and agility of care management processes, but they must also facilitate a cultural use of the technologies themselves. The digital platforms must include other dynamics — other new, cultural, communicational, life elements that facilitate expansion and use among different types of users.

4.6. Centralised body to define parameters

The connection between systems, organisations and users requires prior steps that need to be promoted by a higher body that sets out a series of models, definitions, codes and parameters so that information exchange is effective and certain fundamental conditions are guaranteed, such as data privacy and ease of access for all types of users.